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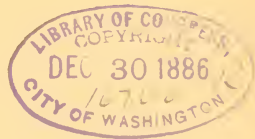
ELSIE'S WEDDING

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

JASPER BARNETT COWDIN

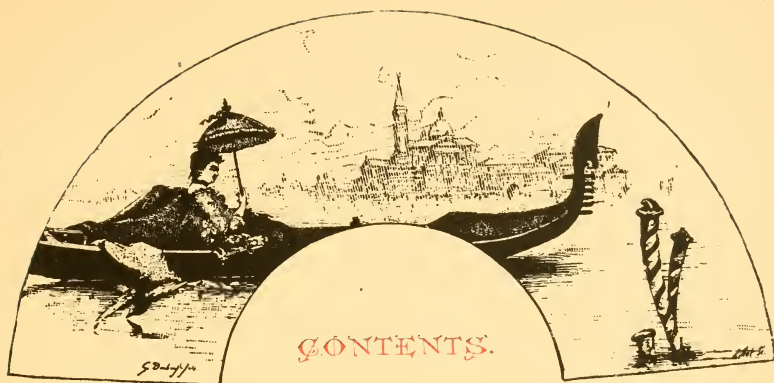


BROOKLYN, N. Y.
D. S. HOLMES, PUBLISHER
388 BEDFORD AVENUE
1886

PS 1449
C55 E5

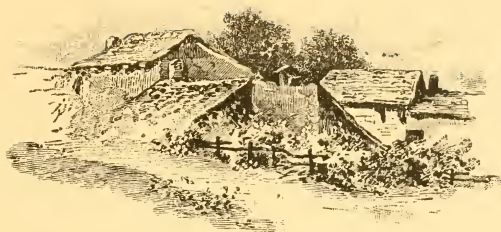
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ELSIE'S WEDDING.

FOUR daughters in our village home,
And Elsie youngest of the four,
Save one wee blossom lately come
To bask in sunshine at the door.
Our Elsie's education done,
She came back to us full of fun,
And sent her rippled laughter light
Around the house from morn till night.
No robin on the topmost limb,
No sparrow flirting through the air,
No restless redwing pert and trim,
No wild bee darting here and there--
None equalled, none, in field or tree,
Her careless flow of gayety.

And youthful Love, a wandering bee,
Found her among the flowers. She
Lived out-of-doors; and loved to haunt
The noisy robin neighborhood,

Or seek the distant hillside slant
Where thrushes found sweet solitude.
She knew all windings of the wood,
And had a chosen nook among
The poplars where the blackbirds played.
Their merry gossip well outsung
The tinkling, shimmering, white cascade
Flying along from shade to shade.
She trained the honeysuckle vine
To climb our roof with graceful twine;
The mammoth rose-bush by the well
Owes half its beauty to her spell
The tiny cottage on its pole,
Above the arbor perching sole,
Where all day long the martins cry,
Mounting, or coming from, the sky,
She made herself; and oftentimes sat
Below it, hearkening their chat,
Or watched them in the topmost blue
Sail round and round, and pass from view.
The butterfly's uncertain flight,
Swift crinkling in the sunshine bright
Above her blossoms, pleased the eyes
Of Elsie; wishing to be wise,
She followed oft the butterflies
To find out where they slept at night.

So youthful Love, a wandering bee,
Found her among the flowers. He
Took dainty notice that her eyes



So youthful Love, a wandering bee,
Found her among the flowers. 14

Were like the pools in Paradise,
The long dark lashes, bent to peep,
Reflected in each dreamful deep.
The cunning watcher thought most rare
The fine gold of her shining hair,
From ideal brow to perfect neck,
Round classic ear, on satin cheek ;
And, doubtless, he became aware
What dew lay on the crimson lip,
If only he were bold to sip !

But how my fancies run away .
The child was not all dreams—nay, nay !
Good common sense did with her dwell ;
In all her ways she pleased us well ;
And never more so than the night,
As, walking homeward through the vale,
The full moon bringing gems in sight
Along the meadows crystal-bright,
She yielded to his tender tale,
And gave her heart to Arthur Dale.
Her choice filled us with deep delight.
Her elder sisters, half in play,
Showed just a *little* jealousy ;
But Elsie's spirit never shot
An arrow to that tender spot !

And so the months were swift to go ;
With their departure went the snow ;
From dripping roofs, from orchard tops

Where chilly winds shook down bright drops,
Blue-robed apostles of the year
Preached of another springtime near.

As on the vine-clad porch we sat
One fragrant eve in early May,
The girls began a lively chat
Of Elsie's coming bridal day.
Father sat smoking his cigar
Just in the window; like a star
The white brow of Viola gleamed,
The dark vine-leaves moon-photographed
Upon it; Amy's soft eyes laughed;
And Elsie's, deeper violet, beamed.

"My turn is next, whichever way
You read the names," cried Amy; "nay,
Viola, I shall married be
Before, like you, I 'm twenty-three!"
Which said, she looked up banteringly.
"Oh, I 'm not in such haste to wed,"
Viola, with imperious head
And dainty tap of slipper, said;
"Indeed, I might have married Ned
At seventeen—at eighteen, Fred;
I 'm not unhappy, as you know,
Though Clarence wed a month ago."
"And left you high and dry, my dear,"
Laughed father, hidden in the dark—
We only saw the moving spark

Of his cigar—"some day, I fear,
You 'll cherish what the poet's pen
Wrote of the saddest *might have been*."
"Husband, you need not waggish be."
I ventured on Viola's part;
"You were the fourth that courted *me*.
There 's time enough yet, never mind;
Viola knows the genuine kind
Of man, and will not break her heart."

"See! there comes Arthur up the hill."
Chimed Amy, shaking out her dress,
And rising. Elsie's heart its thrill
Could safely to the dusk confess
By tingling cheek and step elate,
As, passing through the leaf-arched gate,
She met his dark eye's tenderness,
And let him take a kiss at will.

Within the porch that balmy night
Till late the springtime wooed our stay;
The full moon shed her whitest light,
And tried to make us think 't was day.
Old songs—"Green grow the rushes, O,"
Or quaint "John Anderson, my jo,"
Or "Annie Laurie," rose between
The happy laughters sent to die
Out on the stillness rare and sweet.
On Elsie's brow the light serene
Of perfect joy and hope was seen.

I looked on all with gladdened eye—
No circle could be more complete.

Our orchard trees began to shed
Their scented snows; the spring had fled.
June found us busy, morn till night;
In all the rooms were scraps of white—
So many things to buy, to sew!
The litter seemed to constant grow.
And Elsie, moving to and fro,
A restless and delighted sprite,
Examined this and hummed o'er that,
Or with a sudden impulse drew
Upon her lap the household cat,
And nearly hugged poor Tab in two.
Viola was in Paradise—
I let her purchase, plan, devise;
And Amy's arms, plump, soft and white,
Found in the kitchen great delight,
Their dimples making pretty show,
Half hidden in the pans of dough.
From service Elsie half withdrew,
To keep Miss Moll, on mischief bent.
From making good her dire intent
Of tearing everything in view.
"Tan't I do sumfin, too?" she plead,
Her earnest eyes raised to my face.
"Yes, darling; here's a bit of thread,
A thimble, and a scrap of lace;
Now make for Dolly something nice."
I bent and kissed the rosebud twice.

In two things Elsie had her way :
She made the mammoth wedding cake
(My girls knew how to clean and bake) ;
Arranged her own room to her heart,
And therein showed the nicest art.
Each fanciful arrangement made
Some harmony of light and shade
So delicate, I stood amazed
As through the curtained door I gazed
When all was done. Her fleecy bed
Stood half in shadow, faintly red
From roses peeking through the blind ;
Neat mats filled up the cosy nooks ;
A table held her daintiest books,
One wall with covered volumes lined ;
The silver clock now owned a shelf,
And talked in the corner to itself ;
The tidy on her rocking-chair
Was new to me, all unaware
When she had made it ; on the wall
Her girlish portrait,—stowed away
So many months,—in bright array
Now smiled serenely over all.

I felt my heart grow young again,
And all my girlhood came to me—
The time I said to home good-bye,
With one true heart to live and die,
And crossed the storm-tossed wintry sea.
But Elsie's bright, familiar smile

Would not go from us yet awhile ;
She seemed delighted to remain.

And how her spirits overflowed
As nearer drew the looked-for day !
Caresses she on all bestowed
In such a reckless sort of way !
Her voice grew strangely low and kind ;
The gracious soul within her eyes
Took on a tenderer blue than June ;
Our soft rebukes she did not mind,
But, looking up in sweet surprise,
Kept humming still her quiet tune.
I could not meet her on the stair
Without her soft arm stealing round
My waist ; and oft, I know, I frowned,
And murmured, "What a child you are !"
But she would pull my forehead down
Among her tresses golden-brown,
And whisper, confidentially,
"I must kiss somebody, or I 'll die !"
Then laugh, and from me lightly fly.

The daisies turned the meadows white ;
The lilacs faded out of sight ;
The roses held high carnival
Far up our sunny southern wall.
The oriole, to feed his brood,
Passed back and forth from field to wood ;
From wood to field the robin went,
On family matters deeply bent.

At last, all preparations done,
We idly sat and watched the sun
Sink through the quiet gates of day.
And one by one, above the land,
Strike all the clouds aflush, as they
Came under his transfiguring hand.

The woodlands found a blessed rest ;
No rude wind shook the robin's nest ;
But, oh ! unwelcome from the height,
Along with shadows of the night
One shadow came, and came to stay—
We housed an unexpected guest.

The music in our home grew still ;
Meek on her bed our Elsie lay ;
Her being trembled and grew chill.
She drew my forehead softly down
Among her tresses golden-brown,
And stirred her lips in whispered speech.
Her fond affection's latest mark.
Her hand relaxed in Arthur's palm
Her face assumed a saintly calm—
We knew her frail immortal bark
Was safely launched beyond our reach.

* * * * *

Happy the bride the sun shines on,
Is a good adage. Golden light
Stole through the shutters folded tight,



The one street of the straggling town. 24

To greet the bride in white array,
As in the parlor still she lay
All unawakened by the dawn.

We dressed the bride. Viola brought
The wedding dress of lilies wrought,
And Amy placed, with tender care,
The orange blossoms in her hair.
White slippers on her helpless feet,
And Arthur's ring upon her hand,
No more was needed to complete
Her beauty, than the fragrance sweet
Of wild-flowers from the meadow-land.
She loved them so! Young Love the bee
Had found her in the flowers. She
Loved wild-flowers best—herself, poor child!
At times, perhaps, a little wild.
The meekness of her unstained brow,
White with celestial purity,
Spoke all her wildness over now.

The bell rang from the sunny hill,
Where perched the white kirk looking down
The one street of the straggling town,
And thence we bore her, calm and still,
Submissive to our every will.
The presence of the great Bridegroom
Was there to claim her as his own;
Rare fragrance floated from the room,
Back through the open windows blown;
Matron and maid their tokens brought

Of flowers in homely emblems wrought,
They had so talked and looked ahead
To see their village beauty wed.

The preacher's voice, in measured tone,
Pronounced the solemn rites. Alone
Went Arthur to salute the bride,
The village folk all passed and gone ;
And he that was of her denied,
Yielding unto that Greater One,
Bent over her young loveliness
(The tender silence heard her name),
And all his love and holy vow
He took and sealed upon her brow
In one dear kiss. But, answerless,
Her being stirred not into flame.

So Elsie went away from us
With her delightful nineteen years.
Viola's growing mischievous—
Perhaps, to clear her father's brow ;
At Amy's coaxing, gay caress,
I try a little cheerfulness ;
But all the house seems empty now—
Dear God, forgive these pressing tears !







CUPID IN A NET.

*Come hither, you delightful girls,
Maud, Milly and Susette ;
I've half a mind to sing to you
Of Cupid in a Net.*

THE stern old father tilled his farm
Beneath Virginia's blue,
And took a stately pride in all
His fertile acres grew.

His winsome, blue-eyed daughter, Rose,
With Lulu, dark of eye,
(An orphaned cousin) kept his home,
And courted on the sly.

No lovers were allowed to come
On father Greenwood's ground ;
And so, of course, they met the girls
When he was not around.

Both couples planned a night-escape,
And both the same night chose
All unbeknown to either pair,
Woe to Lulu and Rose !



The sun was late in going down,
The moon was late to rise,
And drifted anchorless from cloud
To cloud through windy skies.

A ladder in the garden stood ;
All sweet arrangements made,
Both girls at different windows sat,
In traveling garb arrayed.

Had they but whispered of their plans
Unto each other, woes
Like these had never fallen at all
On cautious Lulu and Rose !



Soon a dark figure's soft approach
Beneath the orchard boughs
Told Rose her Percy had been true
To their acknowledged vows.

The moon slipped in an inky cloud ;
Rose saw the ladder placed
At Lulu's sill—a shadow mount,
And clasp her cousin's waist !

Ah ! quickly then her feelings changed ;
Her heart beat strange alarms,
As her false lover started off
With Lulu in his arms.

He bore her rapidly across
The pasture to the lane,
The carriage entered in great haste,
And plied the lash and rein.

No word was spoken on the way ;
The horse leaped in the thills,
And splattered mud along the fence
That zigzagged o'er the hills.

The village parson, roused from sleep,
Struck in the hall a light ;
The parties then met face to face—
It was an awkward plight !

The maiden swooned, the lover paled,
The parson stood aghast ;
A servant with reviving salts
Brought Lulu round at last.

“ I do presume you wish to wed,”
Said then the holy man ;
“ But something must be wrong just here ;
Pray tell me, if you can.”

"I do not want to marry *her* ;
I 've brought the wrong girl," said
Poor Percy, as he wished the girl
That moment back in bed.

The dark-eyed Lulu bowed her curls,
And cried from very shame.
What way to get her back unseen
The question now became.

She tried to tell between her sobs,
As thence they journeyed on,
How she had played this trick on him
By thinking he were John.

* * * * *

Meantime, Rose went to Lulu's room
When off she saw them fly,
To see if any missive left
Would clear this mystery.

No letter met her angry search ;
She leaned upon the sill,
And both her blue romantic eyes
With tears began to fill.

Soon a dark figure underneath
The orchard boughs drew nigh,
And made her signals from the dusk ;
She knew the reason why !

She quickly saw her own mistake—
“Coincidence unknown !
Dear Lulu must have fled to-night
With her own lover, John.

“My Percy must have been detained”——
Just then a fateful sound
Came from her father's sleeping-room ;
The lover, with a bound,

Dashed up the ladder after her ;
She sank within his arms,
Too much excited then to speak,
Or dream of misplaced charms.

He bore her rapidly across
The pasture to the lane,
The carriage entered in great haste,
And plied the lash and rein.

No word was spoken on the way ;
The horse leaped in the thills,
And spattered mud along the fence
That zigzagged o'er the hills.

The father on a fleet-foot steed,
A flying shadow, came
In hot pursuit, as if he were
Some hunter chasing game.

The moon behind a wall of cloud
Was safely stowed away,
But soon came out in full, and made
The road as white as day.

Rose turned her face—oh, horrid sight !
'T was John, not Percy, drove ;
She grew too faint to scream, I wis,
Deluded thus by love.

John saw her crown of golden hair,
Her blue romantic eye,
And thought that he some phantom had
Instead of Lulu Bly.

He drew the rein, the carriage stopped ;
The clicking hoofs drew near ;
An angry voice rang out across
The meadows, loud and clear ;

“ So you would slyly take from me
The dearest gem I own !
How could you trust your honor, Rose,
With such a faithless clown ? ”

“ Nay, John and I are not in love,”
Sobbed Rose, “ there 's some mistake ;
Do také me back again, papa,
Elsewise my heart will break.”

"No, I don't want your girl," growled John,
And turned the horse around
In any but a pleasant mood.
The farmer stormed and frowned.

"Don't want her, yet you courted her—
You 've ruined, then, my gal!
You do not wish to marry her?
By Pluto!—John, you *shall*!"

He held a pistol at John's heart,
And made him swear to wed;
Then toward the village parsonage
Was turned the horse's head.

The wildered parson, roused again,
Struck in the hall a light;
And much he marveled at the scenes
Were taking place that night.

"There 's somewhat very queer in this" —
He smiled, and shook his head;
"Not quite an hour ago was I
Awakened from my bed.

"A couple here met face to face;
They seemed in dreadful plight;
The wrong girl he had brought with him.
Somehow, in hurried flight.

"He hastened back with her as fast
As horse and carriage could,
The poor girl sobbing out aloud,
And he in sullen mood.

"So, now—here comes *another* pair"—
He searched the father's eye,
The couple scanned, as if he wished
To learn the reason why.

"Dear father, do forgive us, pray;"
Rose clasped his neck above
"T was Lulu, father, past a doubt,
Came here with my own love.

"Why would you marry me to John,
When Percy is my choice?"
"And Lulu meant to fly with me,"
Said John in basso voice.

The father's humor broke away;
His face grew like the cloud
Just silvering then below the moon.
He laughed most hearty and loud.

"A pretty comedy to play,
And you are well repaid.
Come, let us travel back again."
The old man grimly said.

So back again they traveled fast ;
The carriage went before.
And father Greenwood on his horse
Followed them to the door.

Another horse and carriage stood
Beside the farmhouse gate ;
And half-way up the ladder stood
Young Percy, with the weight

Of Lulu in his aching arms,
He trying with his might
To get her safely in her nest
Beneath the pale moonlight.

"I would not take her in just yet,"
Cried father Greenwood gay ;
"I think you are not quite so sharp
As when you ran away.

"I hope you had a pleasant ride ;
We, too, have been to town.
And heard of your adventure there.
Come, Percy, fetch her down."

Poor Percy stood before his Rose
Awkward and ill at ease ;
Pale Lulu, at beholding John,
Sank down upon her knees.

Soon explanations had dispelled
The muddle of that night;
And in the porch all ate and laughed
Until the morning light.

Stern father Greenwood, overcome
By such unwonted cheer,
Promised an honest wedding feast;
But they must wait—a year!

*So go now and enjoy yourselves,
Maud, Milly and Susette;
You 'll not forget the lesson, dears,
Of Cupid in a Net.*

AN ENGLISH MORNING.

THE skylark, from his font of gleaming clouds,
Christened the new-born day with silver drops
Of song, and all the meadows laughed in dew.
The spider's wheel, hung on the jeweled grass,
Trembled in every spoke; the shadyside
Was full of wordless fun; and the fresh height
Presented to our eyes a landscape rare
Of variegated woods and valleys green—
Eastward the willow, beech, and elm, the chestnut south,
In snowy cones abounding, and the birch
Of leaning zebra-trunk. There close beside
The river lay transfixed and beautiful,
Reflecting, from its sheet of mirror-glass,
The shadow-play of many trembling leaves.



Bright drops in the heavens hang gleaming ;
No breezes the star-mirror break. 40



THE MOUNTAIN LAKE.

I.

Little bird

Out in the jewel-bright weather,
Come listen to me in the shadow ;
Thou butterfly, nymph of the meadow,
Hear me a word !

This your play-place, by man unmolested,
Where no commerce the silence can break,
I have found ; and my spirit lies rested
By the side of your blue mountain lake.

II.

Little dears !

Well do you know the most pleasant,
Most secret green nooks in this bower ;
Familiar each tree-top and flower ;
Blithe pioneers,

You go in the morning light early
A-wing over upland and brake,
New pleasures to find by the pearly,
Smooth edge of your beautiful lake.

III.

Sunny days
Come with their laughs to visit
These scenes of your innocent playing,
Where your gay life goes simply a-Maying
In flower-bright ways.
When your tired wings are folded for slumber
And the waning day leaves a red wake,
Still the sun-children dance a last number
In rings on the cloud-tinted lake.

IV.

Quiet nights
Reign in their brilliant high splendor,
Each mountain a sky-touching column
Of crystalline beauty, yet solemn.
O'er the sharp heights
Bright drops in the heavens hang gleaming
No breezes the star-mirror break;
All night the white lilies lie dreaming,
Asleep on the silver-lit lake.

V.

Happy pair!
Yours are the thousand gay blossoms,
The sunshine, the freedom to wander,
This valley's wild fruitage to squander.
All unaware

How long the white summits have guarded
This ancestral home you partake,
How for ages cold peaks have retarded
Man's steps to your glorified lake.

VI.

Human eyes
Never have opened in wonder
On half of the gorgeousness bidden
To glow in far solitudes, hidden
By the All-wise.
O'er this valley, though man saw it never,
For a bird's or a butterfly's sake
Grand pageants would pass, and forever
Transfigure the lone mountain lake.

THE MOUNTAIN WAY.

O LIFE! with thee we take the mountain way,
Romantic clouds aflush in palaced blue
Above our heads, while myriad drops of dew
Around our young feet twinkle as we stray.
Once o'er the golden walls and cañons gray,
A sober calm invests us as we view
Our backward path; then on to heights more true
We press through storm and darkness day by day.
The heavy thunder far below us dies,
Now lifted to the plane of wisdom's thought.
Between each pass to which our feet are brought,
Though distant mists half blind our mortal eyes,
Hints of the mighty scenery are caught,
And on the last height—an infinite surprise.

VOICES OF WINDS.

WILD as the trumpet-like note of the swan
Blown down the full-flowing breast of the tide,
Voices of winds through the pillars of dawn
Wander sublimely aloft in their pride :
Harping their loneliness, wailing their sorrow,
Telling their grief on the cold mountain-side.

Glad as the revelsome sun-burst of gold
Pushed through the dark-hanging roof of the sea,
Voices of winds greet the mariner bold,
Bending his solemn, lone sail in their glee :
Sport of adversity, touched with bright glory,
What shall his strong spirit's destiny be ?

High as the lyrical grandeur of mood
Reached by the winds when their pinions increase,
Greater that Silence which falleth subdued,
Moving the jubilant tumult to cease :
Life of the mariner, song of the tempest,
Both at the shadowfall—sink into peace.

SCALES.

WHEN gods instead of gods
Choose mortals for their company,
How unlike gods are they ! By many odds
The higher sink ; the lower, still unhigh.

EDEN-BLOSSOM.

THE tiny spirit of the child
Had passed beyond the sky,
Yet peacefully the white face smiled
On all that passed her by.

One placed a rosebud in her hand
At fall of evenhour,
Which, when the morning woke the land,
Became a perfect flower.

The mourners gathered round to hear
Her rites of burial read ;
And, as the preacher o'er her bier
Deplored the early dead,

The rose, as if by heavenly power
Sent to disperse the gloom,
All through the service of the hour
With fragrance filled the room.

The preacher paused ; and pointing, then,
He said, with trembling breath :
" No words of mine can e'er explain
Those mysteries—life and death

" 'T is strange, yet God hath willed it so :
This morning's light was given.
A rose—to blossom here below ;
Your child—to bloom in Heaven."

THE BIRD IN THE SOUL.

A BIRD is singing in my soul,
Softly, sweetly, in my soul,
Pouring forth a pleasant lay,
Singing to me every day.

When the rising sun is nigh
Under rifts of rosy sky ;
When the robin on the limb
Carols blithe his morning hymn ;
When the flowers in their beds
Shake the dewdrops off their heads,
Smiling on me as I stroll—
Then this little bird is singing,
Softly, sweetly, ever ringing
Silver music through my soul.

When the sun with slanting ray
Gilds the hills at close of day,
And the breeze hath died away ;
When I sit within my bower
Dreaming through the quiet hour,
Listening to the murmurs low
Of the oriole on the bough,
A calmness breathing o'er the whole—
Then this little bird is singing,
Softly, sweetly, ever ringing
Silver music through my soul.

When the ground is white with snow,
And the lordly tempests blow,

And the forest birds are gone
Southward to more genial zone,
Still this little bird stays near me,
With its faithful song to cheer me.

Years may come, their sorrows bringing,
Tides may ebb and tides may flow,
Winter come and summer go ;
What care I how seasons roll,
While this little bird is singing
Softly, sweetly, in my soul ?

Carol, carol, little bird ;
Tenderer music ne'er was heard
Than thy mellow, gentle voice,
Making all my heart rejoice.

As down the quiet vale of life
I walk, nor mind the world's mad strife,
O let thy song hush to repose
Each sinful wish that passion knows .
And when, upon my pillow lying,
Friends will whisper I am dying,
And the plaintive night-wind, sighing,
Bears my spirit to its goal—
Let thy calm and peaceful note
In melodious echoes float
Softly, sweetly, through my soul.





Rising, the white rose in her hair
I dared to ask. She pinned it to me. 49

FIRST NIGHT OF WOOING.

It will be long ere I forget
That sweet first night I spent in wooing,
When blithely up the lighted street
I walked the pavements glazed with sleet,
Too eager for my heart's undoing
To mind the crowds, the fog, and wet.

I know my cheeks quite warmly burned
When in the dark I found her number,
A modest house before the square.
Waiting, I hummed a careless air
To soothe my heart-beats into slumber.
A light step, and the door-knob turned !

She led me to a dainty room,
My hateful cheeks fast growing scarlet;
I heard a creaking door, and, lo,
Olivia's baby-brother Joe
Stood peeking in—the little varlet !
Her cheeks confessed a tiny bloom,

As, taking coat, and gloves, and hat,
We soon grew quite at ease together
Half shaded from the cheerful light
Before the coal-fire burning bright,
And cosy-curtained from the weather.
I 'm sure we both enjoyed our chat.

As often as I dared to look
Upon each laughing, roguish feature ;
The violet eyes, the ripple-play
Of crimson lips, the break of day
In golden hair—the whole bright creature,
My faint heart half its hope forsook.

Had I but turned, I might have seen
The empty sofa waiting near her,
Our coming cherished courting-place,
Where face would closely bend to face
When souls had grown a little dearer ;
But, ah, the future's mystic screen !

Of course, we talked of nothing *then*
Like love : the coming fair and supper,
The Sunday school, the parson's wife,
The books we liked, the aims of life,
All subjects very prim and proper.
An hour too soon the clock struck ten.

Rising, the white rose in her hair
I dared to ask. She pinned it to me ;
And, standing close before my sight,
The deft touch of her fingers light
Sent streaks of honey through and through me.
I longed to clasp her then and there !

No good-night kiss, no whispers light,
As at the door we softly parted ;
A gentle press of hand, that 's all ;
A low request again to call ;
And down the darkened street I started,
The fog-bells tolling through the night.

What thought had I for damp or cold ?
From that time forth my heart grew bolder,
Until I asked—oh, not a rose !
But, hush—a breath—a stir of clothes—
My daughter 's peeking o'er my shoulder ;
The minx ! I know her threads of gold.

PRIEST AND NUN.

THEY met in youth, but that was long ago ;
They met to love, but love turned into woe.
Unknown to each, forever torn asunder,
Each at religion's altar fled the blow.

He a grave priest became, she a pale nun,
Their hopes, their dreams, dead. The slow years crept on.
But memory kept sacred, dear and tender,
The early love so ardently begun.

All unknown each to other, far apart,
Love stirred within his silent tomb, the heart,
And knew his hour approaching to deliver
UngUILTY victims from the cruel dart.

The years crept on ; and, moving toward the dark,
Her face grew seraph-pure ; her lingering spark
Paled in Death's shadow—waited at his portal,
And for prophetic wing-beats seemed to hark.

The light winds kissed her coolly where she lay ;
An unknown hand left flowers in her way ;
And when she questioned whose, the nurse spake gently,
“ The priest will come and visit you to-day.”

An instant recognition when he came
Lightened each face ; both hearts leaped up in flame !
She faintly smiled, and then, his warm hand taking,
Soft clasped it, breathing holily his name.

The barren vista stretched from day to day
So hopeless under canopy of gray,
Flowered in a moment. Oh ! her look was blessèd,
Her earnest, last look, as she passed away.

Lying so peaceful, weak, and all forlorn,
Her eyes, wherein contented joy was born,
Still smiled on him, e'en though their loosened spirit
Was far upon its way to Eden's morn.

After such joy, what ark of flesh can hold
This jubilant essence ? Earth,—too dull, too cold,—
No longer kept him. When his spirit mounted,
Gray sunset clouds turned suddenly to gold.



The restful tinkle of baptizing herds. 54

THE CENTER OF THE COIL.

SINCE all things lovely on the peaceful earth,
And glorious in the upper world of blue,
Change oft their pageant colors, bringing new,
Romantic forms before us, and sweet mirth
 Is sent from leafy haunts
To charm and satisfy our fine artistic wants ;

Since hunger, thirst and comfort have been met
By a providing Hand, that day and night
Is planning for our senses new delight ;
Since all dumb creatures play, and have no fret
 As the fair seasons roll—
Why art thou ever moved with vague unrest, O soul ?

More perfect rest will ne'er be shown to thee
Than that of twilight valleys lulled with song,
Or from the silvered shore, where all night long
The moonlight rocks the cradle of the sea.
 That great calm on the deep
Superbly speaks when man's vain noises fall asleep.

The quiet magnitude of starlit skies
And holy pause of night-winds in the vale,
No movement save the silent meteor's trail ;
The distant calls and near-by low replies
 Of Nature's watchmen—seem
To breathe a high repose beyond life's narrow dream.



The dream-inviting song of waterfall
Threading with skeins of light the swarthy wall. 51

The mild content of summer on the hill ;
The restful tinkle of baptizing herds ;
The hell-like chorus of unnumbered birds ;
The graceful droop of willow-tops ; the still
 Midsummer cloud, so white,
So drowsy that it stops and slowly melts from sight ;

The cricket's chirp along the flatland creeks ,
The dream-inviting song of waterfall
Threading with skeins of light the swarthy wall ;
The greenwood pond brushed into silver streaks
 By soft winds, half asleep,
Till, in their frame of leaves, the stippled waters creep—

Such sights and sounds of Nature grandly teach
A lesson of composure ; yet the soul,
Which hath its earthly joys, its high control
Of vast events, and kingdoms at its reach,
 Moves on with restless eye
To find the royal seal of immortality.

This earth is but the center of our coil,
Whose ever-widening circles yet will touch
Undreamed-of stars. Our spirits are of such
Fine gossamer as needs a heavenly soil,
 And God's bright smile of power,
To flourish and produce life's last and perfect flower.

Strange oversight in Nature's wondrous plan !
All-perfect save in this,—and this the chief,—
If there exist no balm for our relief,
No answer to the yearning soul of man.

Who, then, will to his breast
Invite mankind, and dare to offer true soul-rest ?

O hark ! Above vast empires in decay ;
Above the hollow-moaning winds of doubt ;
Above earth's groans, and tears, and battle-shout ;
Above religion's pompous, long array ;
Sin's wild, tempestuous sea—
A solitary Voice comes out of Galilee.

•

THE REALMS OF SLEEP.

THE realms of Sleep lie dark and deep,
And none of us may go,
Save in our dreams, to catch faint gleams
Of all we long to know.

The phantom seas, moved by no breeze,
Eternal secrets keep ;
From weird rock walls no echo falls
To break thy spell, O Sleep !

Sunk far below our crust of woe,
Vast empires all unknown,
Host after host, whose names are lost,
Through thy rude gates are gone.

Ambitions high, the dauntless eye,
Dark thoughts that fired the breast,
All hopes and fears, all joys and tears,
Lie hushed in perfect rest.

For aught we know, dead planets go
Through yon unmeasured deep,
With many a soul from zone to pole
Locked in the arms of Sleep.

Abysses old, rent, black, and cold,
Looked on by pitiless stars,
Shine ghastly white in desolate light,
And show their withered scars.

No fiery shocks upheave the rocks;
Age after age hath slipped
To death alone, yet never one
Unlocks the ancient crypt.

The trumpet's bray at break of day,
The Lord's voice, strong and deep,
Shall, when it falls, destroy thy halls,
And end thy reign, O Sleep!

HURRIED ALONG.

HURRIED along! hurried along! How soon
From dewy youth to life's unrestful noon!—
Merged in the loud discussion and the fray,
Whose hard-won prizes fade with fading day.

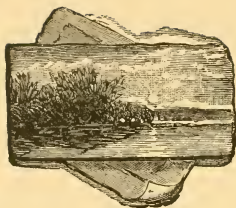
Hurried along! hurried along! Our feet
Fly on, their journey ever incomplete;
Weighed and found wanting by the widening mind,
What hopes, what joys, what passions, left behind!

Hurried along! hurried along! The tomb
May hide the broken remnants in its gloom;
But, oh! the soul, a-wing again, and strong,
With crowds of shining worlds is hurried along!

MILTON.

STILL up the mountain! Ever we must climb
To see the Poet light his altar-fires
On starry summits of eternal rhyme,
Where congregate vast thoughts, and strong desires
Catch up the soul and bear it on sublime
Through heavens reddening at the birth of Crime,
And jarring to the infinite thunder-tread
Of godlike footsteps marching on to death.

In awed suspense we wait his trumpet-breath
Blown through the sunless regions of the dead;
Or watch his quiet moon gild Eden bright.
Sudden, the culminating flash divine
Lights up his theme; and, carried to its height,
The closing thunder rumbles down the line.



APRIL.

FLEE the dim shadows of night!—
Before the untrumpeted hosts of light
Coming from orient caves,
The silver rim of dawn breaks far in reddening waves!

Indeed, I am a true and fervent Greek
To see the forms of gods in yonder streak
Of white cloud, and to hear the mellow din
Of bright Apollo's horses galloping in.

* * * * *

From early dawn till afternoon wears by
Far westward over clicking rails we fly,
The thunders of the Nineteenth Century
Jarring the peaceful fields; and, as I look
From the car-window past a stony brook,
And over gentle hillsides turning green,
A cloud the earth and sunlight comes between.
The skirts are dark, and trail along the mead;
Of dazzling whiteness the bare breast and head;
One gleaming arm and hand scatters brown showers.
Still a firm Greek, whom can it be, say I,
But APRIL, nymph air-footed, hurrying by
To waken from their frosty dream the flowers?

AWAKE, O SOUL!

AWAKE, O drowsy soul, awake!
Thy deathful bands of darkness break,
And see what manner of high spirit
Dwells in thy flesh. Thou dost inherit
From the bright God a kindred spark
To light this world's unfriendly dark;
And deeds to bless thy fellow man
Are thine to do—none other can.

Awake, O drowsy soul, awake!
To see what glories for thy sake
Arise and set, yet dwindle never,
Earth, sea and sky transfigured ever.
Thine arch, by day a flood of light,
Swarming with golden worlds by night
Thyself a world not born to die,
But traveling through eternity.

Awake, O drowsy soul, awake!
From custom, price, and market, break;
Thinking all love but idle dreaming,
Blind but to selfish, narrow scheming,
Open thine eyes to wider day,
Thy foolish playthings cast away.
And add thy strength, ere it be gone,
To God's great Drama whirling on!

REJOICE, O MAN!

REJOICE, O man! mourn not thy state;
Count well thy days again,
The days of sunshine many and great—
Why count the days of rain?

E'en though thy days of darkness be
Remembered yet with pain,
The golden grains are left with thee;
Thy chastening was not vain.

All Nature tells, we were not born
For laughter of the skies—
To walk abroad at gleeful morn
With dull and downcast eyes.

God is not all a solemn power
His unseen liveliness
Puts in our way, at every hour,
Hints plain as words express.

The squirrel's pert and saucy head
The robin's roguish eye—
Were these created by a dread
And laughless majesty?

Humor and quirk so oft appear,
Our sins He hath so borne,
Sigh not in thy Creator's ear
That man was made to mourn!



THE COUNTRY BOY'S CAROL

ON HIS WAY TO SCHOOL.

THE grasshopper rides like a sailor
On the laughing green ripples of grass ;
His dress-coat was cut by a tailor ;
He whistles to me as I pass :
Churr, chicory chee !
All in the bright morning weather.

The spider, aloft in the bramble,
Swings out on his silken trapeze ;
If touched, up his line he will scramble
As lively and light as you please,
Hauling in, hauling in,
Till hid in the leafy green weather.

The little brown head of Sir Redbreast
Comes bobbing along through the grass ;
He pertly peeps up, as in dread lest
I harm his wee self as I pass.
Twec, turrup, twittle !
All in the dewy cool weather.

THE PALACE OF NIGHT.

Bob White is abroad in the meadow ;
The yellow-bird swings on a spray ;
Afraid of my long, coming shadow,
He airily gallops away.

Cut, cut, cut, kedackut !

Comes through the hay-scented weather.

The axe of the woodman is bringing
An oak from the forest near by ;
The bell in the belfry is ringing ;
Away to the school I must hie—

O fidelity fie !

Losing the sunny bright weather.

THE PALACE OF NIGHT.

Fair Dian to her silver waist
Lies in the myriad-shining sea
The crystal crest of the smokeless peak
Gleams in the blue infinity ;
Up in the sky-roof, reaching far,*
Sparkling white clusters hang in view :
The iceberg floats like a fallen star,
White in the under-blue ;
A trail of agate crosses the west ;
The northern lights dance proud ;
Away in the south lies a ball of snow—
The moonlight sleeps in the cloud.

Where the winds are lost in a world of calm,
Where all is so pure and bright,
O the human heart is a happy king
In the silver palace of Night !

THE NATION'S HONORED DEAD.

Go call the shining roll of all
Bright minds, from earliest time,
And see if any greater be,
Whose deeds are more sublime
Than theirs who lie beneath our sky,
Their works to perish never,
Their thoughts to dart from shore to shore
Forever and forever.

The high heroic dust may lie
Asleep by Illium's wave,
Or find where sacred pillars wind
A Roman's anthemed grave;
But never man, since time began,
Hath left a crimson stain
More bright on Freedom's breast of white
Than that of Lincoln slain.

The hand of Grant, that could withstand
The onsets of the foe,
That freed his nation in her need,
And brought the mighty low;
The pure, the kind, the simple mind.
Though leader of the host—
A greater than this loyal man
What other land can boast?

The flame of Washington's bright name
Shall flash upon the scroll
While men command the glowing pen.
Or sway the listening soul.

For justice, truth, and liberty,
For calm, high valor known,
Among the silvered peaks of life
His figure stands—alone.

And, lo ! where stately rivers flow ;
By blue Atlantic's wave ;
In sight of rocky spires touched white ;
Far north, where lone winds rave ;
Or where the sleepy orange groves
Their golden limits set,
Lies pillowed now a star-bright host
Whose works are moving yet.

Ah ! must we walk above their dust,
And leave the vast design
Half done, and, like a clouded sun,
In their great presence shine ?
No ! Crush the last remaining wrong,
Till every sister state
Knows only just and equal laws—
Where every man is great !

PUNCTUALITY.

AHEAD of time is a waste of time. 'T were well
You aped the star, whose movements men foretell.
While here you wait, some duty, left afar,
Wonders and wonders where in the world you are

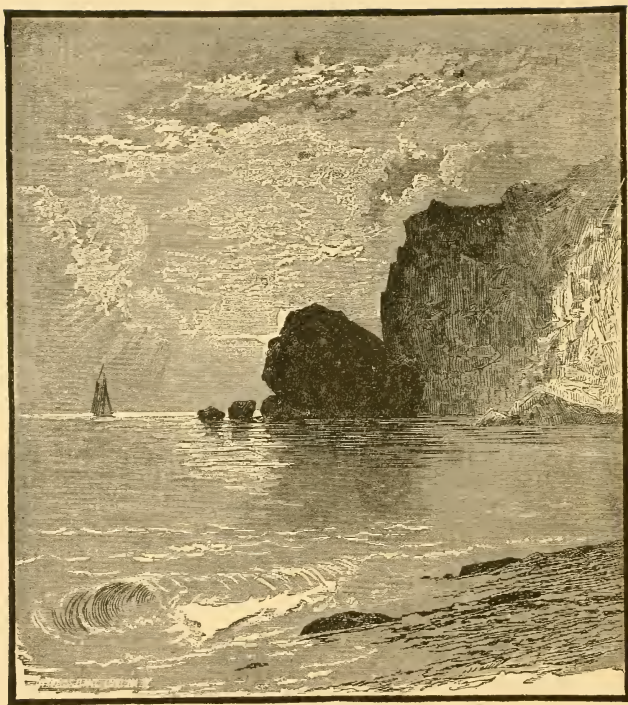


MOONLIGHT ON THE SNOW.

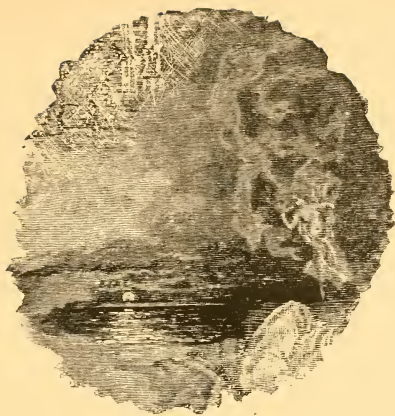
A round red isle of sunset-spark
Floats off and beyond the moon,
Whose fleecy wheel in the deepening dark
Will be illumined soon.
The whitened farms will gleam with gems :
In winter's dazzling show
There is no sight more radiant
Than the moonlight on the snow.

The far-off jewels of the sky
Will shiver in frosty blue ;
And the jingle of sleighbells flying by,
And the ringing laughters, too,
Will lightly rise o'er the hillside road,
To sink in the vale below ;
While glad eyes beam out brilliantly,
Like the moonlight on the snow.

The diamond dust so thickly sown
O'er meadow, and lake, and hill—
Oh! nothing in this hard world is known
So spotless, meek, and still !
I love to lie in its glistening wealth ;
I could die with delight, I know,
Were my spirit pure and beautiful
As the moonlight on the snow.



Hearsed in dark splendor, cloud-enfolden,
The dead Sun lies on the sea, at rest. 67



SUN-BURIAL.

A SYMPHONY.

A mortal, watching an ocean sunset from the cliffs, imagines in the cloud-forms a funeral pageant, and hears in the winds the voices of assembling spirits. Contemplation, personified as the laureate, suggests to him the likeness his own spirit bears to the fading glories of the day.

MORTAL.

THE causeway lies tremblingly golden
Leading down to his pyre in the west.
Where, hearsed in dark splendor, cloud-enfolden,
The dead Sun lies on the sea, at rest.

Up through the shadow-world's bright-stained portals
Cometh his laureate, rise the immortals;
Thronging up the ocean-aisles, where light shines low,
Past the rosy pillars of mountains aglow,

Hark, they come !

With measured rise and fall the flaring torches grow ;
The distant trumpets grieve in swelling notes of woe—

Hark, they come !

Solemnly, solemnly, the echoes die, the echoes die—

Hark, they come !

By land and sea. to glorify the evening sky,
The gemmed flotilla moves, the marching host draws
nigh—

Hark, they come !

Bright forms in golden galleys anchor all
Around the dead Sun's crimson pall—
Many a dragon-prow pavilioned rare,
Many a pearl-tint sail furled from the air,
Down-slanting myriad oars, countless as wheat,
Soft doubled on the mirroring water-sheet—
Yea, Titan shadows of long vanished years
Uplift uncounted pennoned spears ;
Stands the Contemplant Spirit, laurel-crowned ;
The shepherded flocks of Memory
Deepen wide around
And high above the sunken luminous canopy
Where lieth the Sun in state,
Under the arch of the western gate.

One will the torch apply ;
And all the wide sullen sky
Clothing itself in rapid tints sublime,
Will light the darkened footsteps keeping time
To movements vast and slow.

Like dark-clad nuns in cloisters singing,
Singing low.
Pass the Night Hours, chanting psalms :
Folded meek their saintly palms
On each white and holy breast,
Expressive of their blessed rest,
And bringing
Peace, peace, over the wide unrestful deep ;
Peace, peace, and the golden calm of sleep.

HOURS OF THE FIRST WATCH.

(*Singing.*)

Glitters cold the spray-light jostling o'er the sea ;
Lightly dance the Day Hours, madcap winds are free !
But we still Night Hours breathe a deeper charm
O'er sea, o'er sky, o'er rocky steep,
The dayspring music fled,
When, like some master-spirit far ahead
Of all his time, one bold bright star
Gleams in the empty blue afar,
And, mindful of her darlings where they cling,
The lonely petrel dips a homeward wing
In crystal ridges of the wave-dark deep.

SPIRIT OF CONTEMPLATION.

(*Speaking*)

Mortal, that standest on the naked height,
Sole watcher of the slow approach of Night,
All still, save ocean's waves calm-shaking after strife—
The grandeur of their great unrest

Is imaged in thy human breast
 Heaving with immortality, and rife
 With trembling hopes of thousand kinds.
 Under the cliffs the wearied winds
 Are singing themselves to sleep,
 Unmindful if a storm be brewing on the deep;
 Even so thy heart may fold its wing secure—
 Trustful, pure—
 Yea, sing itself to sleep amid the storms of life.

HOURS OF THE MIDDLE WATCH.

(Singing.)

Encircled by a shade of rings
 The spectral Moon o'erstares the land,
 As 't were great Saturn nigh at hand
 Foretelling dreadful things;
 The drifting cobweb of a cloud
 Light tangled in a skein of stars;
 Next moment, when the gale is loud,
 A heaven draped with somber bars;
 Wild winds that wreck the peace of Night,
 And shake their furious music down
 The uninhabited wastes of lonely shore,
 Fleeing wildly from their own delight,
 And shrieking fiendlike o'er
 The sleep-deserted town :—
 We be witnesses of sin
 More innocent-seeming far than these—
Human hearts asleep in deathful ease;
 Hence we be



Memory-flocks in mystic meadows. 73

Slow to agree
Murder and Night are kin.

SPIRIT OF CONTEMPLATION.

(Speaking.)

Mortal, in whose godlike breast
Stormy passions have their nest,
In still watches of the Night
Thou canst climb the mystic height :
Thoughts that overlook the tops
Of immortality
Are born to thee,
And Life her mask half drops.
Would ye bear the wormy shroud,
The certain end, without repining ?
Ye must be higher than the cloud
To see its silver lining.

HOURS OF THE LAST WATCH.

(Singing.)

Romantic shapes of flying mist
Over the silver-crested wave
Darken and lighten as they list ;
The vivid stars are brave !
Stemming the currents of the dark
While sliding cloud-racks pass away.
As they fain would wait to mark
Far o'er the ocean's rayless vacancy
The rosy touches of a dawn begun,
And resurrection of the rekindled Sun.

SPIRIT OF CONTEMPLATION.

(Speaking.)

Mortal ! mortal !

All transfigured on the softened height ;
Lost in the overflow of setting light,
While the fleecy Moon steps from her portal
Abroad in the fields of Night—
Dost thou not think, thus lonely on the shore,
Of many a fair hope set to rise no more ?

Passing by, the Night Hours sing
Of the varied moods they bring,
Meantime the o'ershadowing sky
Changing in shape, and its glory beginning to die ;
Slow dieth the last faint psalm.

Life hath a sunset of her own
More solemn, ay, more grand !—
A palace of rest where the breast makes never moan ;
Beyond the gloom of the tomb a great white Hand
Lays on the wearied spirit balm.

(Addressing the shadows.)

Downward let your banners slant,
All ye gods of shadow ! Chant,
Titan shadows, thronging shadows ;
Land-locked shapes in jeweled cars ;
Memory-flocks in mystic meadows ;
Bright forms in flaming galleys anchored all
Around the dead Sun's crimson pall—

Let your blended voices rise
Like organ-music to the skies,
While these glories pass away,
And the fair-garmented young Day
Departs a white spirit upward through the stars.

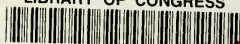
CHORUS OF IMMORTALS.

Thy golden links are broken,
Far scattered from the sea ;
Thy race is run, O Sun !
Dark waters cover thee.
The Moon shall set her token,
A path of silver bright,
On the wave that is thy grave,
Sad from the voiceless height ;
The faery-sandaled winds will pass
Light whispering above the grass,
And run along the limpid sea
In search of thee ;
And the leaves all shake,
And the waves sob strange,
Till the new Day break
On the cold gray range,
Where now slow Darkness throws
Her curtain of repose
Over the calm, calm sea,
Over the wide, wide sea.

Finis.



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